

The Winding Road

nightcore

The Winding Road by nightcore

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Genre: ?? - Freeform, Coming of Age, Fluff, M/M, Minor Angst, Swearing, but it's internal and it goes away pretty quick, just boys talkin about their futures, no pennywise, uhh

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, watch me put ben and stan into every fic even if they're not main characters

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Summary:

"At the time, they both had chosen to ignore it. There was an awkward silence that lasted for what felt like hours, Richie made a joke, Eddie wiped his tears (he had been upset about something, but Richie couldn't remember what) and everything felt normal again. They never bothered speaking about it, because they both were afraid of change, and something like... whatever it was -- that would be the biggest change of all. "

Until now.

The Winding Road

Author's Note:

Also posted on my tumblr (polaroidstan)!

I.

“You guys wanna get a pizza, or something?” Ben asked, stepping down from the arcade cabinet and flexing his hands. He had put up a hard fight, but it seemed like not even he could come close to beating a (self-titled) legend. Richie had managed to win so many times, in fact, that the motion of typing his name in became muscle memory; and soon enough, RCHI was flashing in big yellow letters, boasting his skills to the world.

“I guess. Beats watching Richie destroy you over and over again.” Stan laughed, shoving his hands in his pockets. The arcade, despite being shelter from the wind, was still no match for the Autumn chill. “I’ve only got a five, though.”

“Don’t you worry, Stan! I’ll pay for it.” Richie reached a hand into his pocket, revealing a crumpled wad of cash. A few quarters flew out, too, shooting in different directions and clattering on the ground. Stan groaned.

“Richie, I got it.”

“Nonsense!” Richie’s shout overtook Ben’s voice, his cadence slipping into an accent that sounded *just* British enough to give an illusion, if anything. “You both owe me one, now. In fact--”

Richie was cut off by the familiar chirp of a text alert. He cleared his throat and pulled his phone out with his free hand, still handling the money in his other.

[4:30pm] eds: *hey, are you doing anything tonight?*

“Somebody hold this,” his voice was still British, though not intentionally so, repeating the rhythms of speech like a broken record. He held the wad of money out and dropped it in Ben’s hands carefully, Ben juggling with it for a moment and sighing when he successfully clasped the bills between his hands.

[4:31pm] Richie: i can be free in like half an hour

[4:31pm] Richie: why

“You want us to go ahead?” Stan asked, sharing a glance with Ben before motioning towards the door. The pizza place they frequented was only a few blocks down; Richie would’ve be able to get there in less than a minute if he had brought his bike. He hadn’t, because the crack in his glasses let the cold air through, and it stung his eyes when he sped forward. He was also, in general, too lazy to bother with getting it out of the shed in his backyard.

“I’m comin’, I’m comin’,” he clicked the phone on vibrate and shoved it back into his pocket. The boys had barely made it halfway down the block when his phone buzzed.

[4:33pm] eds: do you wanna go on a walk?

[4:33pm] Richie: ?? yeah sure

He hesitated, typing out another message before clicking the phone off again.

[4:33pm] Richie: you ok?

[4:34pm] eds: yeah don’t worry!

[4:34pm] *eds: text me when you're done and we'll meet in the park?*

[4:34pm] *Richie: u got it spaghetti man*

Richie convinced himself the way his stomach tightened was a side effect of his hunger. He chose to ignore the way it lingered, even after the last slice of pizza was gone from the cardboard box.

II.

Half an hour passed and Richie found himself standing outside Derry's central park. Hands shoved in his pockets, he was swaying back and forth on his feet, arguing with himself on whether it was really worth it to go inside (Stan, just earlier, had promised him 'yes, just do it, for christ's sake'). He didn't know why he was so nervous -- this was just Eddie, they've hung out alone like, a million times, and not once was it weird. *Except, now that...*

Eddie was sitting on a bench, not too far from where he was standing. His arms were crossed and he was watching the sunset through the trees, scarf wrapped over his mouth. The sunlight illuminated his face perfectly, wrapping around his features like he was a work of art in a museum. Richie cursed to himself, quietly -- *he must've been sitting there for forever.*

He walked, slowly, taking care in every step, up to Eddie.

"You been here long?" He asked, offering a half-hearted smile. Eddie nodded.

"Yeah, but it's not actually that bad. Besides, I figured you'd be late."

"Ouch, Eds! Harsh."

They both laughed, but there was an odd tension between them. They knew what was going to happen, whether they wanted it to or not. Richie wanted to prolong this tension, this weird atmosphere, so they wouldn't have to talk about it.

Richie was not one to regret anything he said. Sometimes it would get him beat, sometimes he would get a laugh, and most times, an aggravated sigh, but he never regretted it. He said things on impulse, whatever was on his mind at the moment would come out in one way or another. It was his biggest strength and his greatest weakness.

When Richie admitted his ‘feelings’

“ Fuck, Eds! I care about you more than anything, you should know that!”

to Eddie, he had no way of telling if that was entirely on impulse. He wasn’t sure if he had meant to spit it out or not, but he did, and doesn’t think he can ever forget the look on Eddie’s face.

At the time, they both had chosen to ignore it. There was an awkward silence that lasted for what felt like hours, Richie made a joke, Eddie wiped his tears (he had been upset about something, but Richie couldn’t remember what) and everything felt normal again. They never bothered speaking about it, because they both were afraid of change, and something like... whatever it was -- that would be the biggest change of all.

Richie was sure about how he felt, he just wasn’t sure what to call it. He liked Eddie. He liked the way he laughed, the way his face scrunched up when he was angry, the way his hair grew out in subtle curls instead of perfectly straight. He liked the way his face got pink when Richie made fun of him, or pinched his cheeks.

“ Cute, cute, cute!”

“Stop it, Richie!”

He even liked the stupid things about him, like how he wore two fanny packs (even one felt a little excessive) or how Richie could make him gag by pouring water on his bread at lunch. He spent a lot of his time hoping Eddie felt the same way, though he supposed he wouldn’t really mind if he didn’t.

Not until he told him, that is. They had joked the rest of the night, but Richie had an uncharacteristic nagging in the back of his head, shouting *stupid, stupid, stupid!*

"You knew we were gonna have to talk about this eventually, didn't you?" Eddie's voice broke him out of his trance. Richie began to notice the cold air slowly seeping into his bones. He sighed.

"I don't know, Eds. Figured we could talk about your mom, instead--"

Eddie cleared his throat, "Beep beep, Rich. That doesn't even make any sense."

There was another silence, and the nagging voice came back.

"Let's... actually start walking, then," Richie smiled, though a little uncomfortably. He tried to shove his hands deeper into his pockets, but there was no room left. "It's easier to talk when we're walking, right?"

Eddie hummed and stood up, brushing the wrinkles in his jacket away with his hands. His gloves were cute. They were gray and knitted, like his grandmother had made them especially for him. "It's weirdly cold out, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Richie agreed, "for the beginning of Fall, it feels a little fuckin' ridiculous."

This small talk continued for a while as the boys made their way out of the park. Eddie stopped, several times, once to pet a dog and another to point out a bird he thought Stan would like. Richie occasionally had to consciously slow down to match Eddie's pace, anxiety getting the best of him. Neither of them knew how to start talking about the matter at hand.

They continued up to where the street broke off into two, in front of the Neibolt street church. The sun was almost gone beyond the horizon, and Richie was getting kind of worried he would freeze to death before they actually made any progress. Eddie stopped again.

"Let's sit here," he motioned to the curb in front of the church. The place felt oddly... safe. *It's kind of funny*, Richie thought, *how they could just turn right and that feeling would go away. How Neibolt house was right there, and yet, here they were. Even the air around that house at the other end of the street felt evil.* He sat down, though, because that's

what Eddie told him to do.

"I'm sorry," Eddie started, choosing to avoid Richie's gaze and stare down at his feet instead. His hair had fallen into his eyes, but he made no movement to fix it. "For not talking with you about this earlier."

Richie's brow furrowed. "What d'you mean?"

"I mean," Eddie was fidgeting a lot, his fingers tapping against the cement as he spoke, "that I just don't really know what I want, so I was avoiding it. I was... I don't know."

"Scared?"

"Y-yeah. Scared. It's stupid, huh?"

Richie opened his mouth to make a joke about how 'stuttering Bill' was going to become 'stuttering Eddie', but he stopped himself, opting for a simple shake of the head instead. "I don't think it's stupid, Eds."

"You wouldn't know stupid if it hit you like a train."

They both laughed, and Richie noticed that Eddie's hands stopped gripping the edges of the curb so hard. He really wanted to brush the hair out of his eyes. Eddie continued.

"Rich, I'm gonna tell you something. I just want you to promise you won't, I don't know, laugh, or anything."

"Have you met me, Eds?" He joked, but Eddie didn't smile. Richie cleared his throat and spoke again, softer this time. "Course, Eddie. I won't laugh. Cross my heart, and all that."

Eddie sighed. Richie subconsciously prepared himself for the worst.

"I'm worried. I'm worried, Rich, about what'll happen if it ends. If we go through with," he paused, trying to come up with a word, "I don't know, whatever *this* turns out to be, and it ends badly, am I gonna lose you? Or everyone else? I don't wanna make a mistake like that, no matter how much I..." He groaned, skipping over what he was

about to say. "I don't want to take a winding road, I like when I can see exactly what's going to happen instead of having to worry about it. What do I do, 'Che?'"

Richie picked his next words carefully. It wasn't something he did often, but it really wasn't the time for lighthearted banter. Eddie was scared -- genuinely scared, and it wasn't the kind of fear you could fix with a blanket and some ice cream.

"Eds, listen to me, alright? Really listen to me."

Eddie, for the first time since they sat down, met Richie's eyes with his own.

"It's not my choice to make. I can't control what you do -- I've never been able to, really, even when I wanted to, so I don't think it's a good idea for me to be making decisions for you." He thought for a moment, then continued, "I care about you. A lot, Eds. I'm not just saying that to be cheesy, or anything, I'm tellin' you the truth. I don't want to think there's a chance that... y'know, *whatever this is*, could go wrong. I hate thinking about that. But even if it does," he smiled, "then I think I'll still stick around, because I love annoying *you* more than anyone."

There was an unreadable expression on Eddie's face -- not that Richie hadn't tried to read it, but he couldn't settle on anything other than an odd mixture of adoration, worry, and just plain annoyance that he couldn't figure out. Then Eddie smiled, looking back down at the asphalt. They sat like that for a little while, but the tension from before was lifted, leaving them in a comfortable silence.

"I think -- uh, I think it's time for me to go home." Eddie said, suddenly, pushing himself up to a standing position. Richie followed suit, his heart still practically beating straight through his chest. He could almost feel it in his fingertips. He was doing his best to keep his composure, but Richie was almost sure his face was as red as humanly possible.

Eddie hugged him, only briefly. Richie absentmindedly noted how short he was, sliding perfectly under his chin, and how soft his hair felt against his face. They separated and Richie felt his shoulders

relax; it was funny, because he hadn't even realized they were tensed. He nodded a hasty goodbye and turned and Eddie did the same. *Neither of them really wanted to leave, Richie hoped, but they didn't know what else to say.*

Eddie only took a few steps before stopping again.

"Also," Eddie started, making Richie stop mid-step, "I think I'd prefer the winding road, now that you put it like that."

Richie spun on his heels, hands still in his pockets, and met Eddie's gaze. He was smiling, not a shit-eating grin or some kind of sarcastic smirk, but a genuine, adorable, Eddie Kaspbrak smile. The light was bouncing off of him in a way that, if Richie had described him as 'glowing', he wouldn't have felt too far off. His scarf was pushed up almost to his nose, but it still revealed a slight pink flush across his cheeks. Richie was sure that it wasn't because of the cold.

His heart fluttered.

"That was dramatic as fuck, Eds."

I love you.

"Shut up, trashmouth."

I love you too.

Author's Note:

I love their dynamic I hope I got it right;; please tell me if there's any grammar/spelling mistakes so I can fix them!